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SUBJECT: CZECH EU PRESIDENCY: COMMENTS ON UPCOMING MARCH
GAERC

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: On March 11 emboff spoke with Magdalena Janesova of the Czech MFA Department of Common Foreign and Security Policy in advance of the March 16-17 EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). Of note were her comments on: Transatlantic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Syria, Belarus, and Sudan. End Summary.

Transatlantic Relations - Upcoming April Summit

¶2. (SBU) The EU Foreign Ministers are expected to discuss transatlantic relations (as well as the Middle East) over lunch at the GAERC. FM Schwarzenberg will brief all of the EU FMs on his meetings with Secretary Clinton on March 6 and Vice-President Biden on March 10. The Czechs then plan to open this up for discussion to allow the EU FMs to express what they would like to see happen during the POTUS visit. The FMs will discuss what topics they would like to cover at this summit, as well as their interest in discussing separate topics at a luncheon of the FMs versus the EU leaders. (Note: Czech MFA officials have expressed interest in having the EU leaders luncheon be separate from a luncheon of Foreign Ministers as they fear a luncheon with 60 plus leaders and FMs could be too unwieldy. End Note.)

Balkans - Bosnia and Montenegro

¶3. (SBU) Bosnia: Janesova noted that not much had changed since our last conversation on this subject (reftel). With the upcoming Peace Implementation Council (PIC) scheduled for March, the EU understands the USG position on full implementation of the five objectives and two conditions will make it impossible to come to agreement to close the Office of the High Representative (OHR) at this meeting. She did reaffirm that the EU wants to see the OHR closed soon, and again referenced the June PIC as the next most reasonable time frame to revisit the topic. With respect to Valentin Inzko (EUHR Solana's announced replacement for EUSR Miroslav Lajcak), she noted that the EU has appreciated the USG comments. She noted that his appointment was being handled via EU written procedure and that the Czechs anticipated that his appointment was likely to be formally approved as of COB March 11. The EU is hoping to have him in place as soon as possible to minimize any gaps between Inzko and Lajcak.

¶4. (SBU) Montenegro: The Czechs continue to work on "avis" (passing Montenegro's application to the European Commission for its opinion). Janesova stated that the Germans have remained firm that they want "more time to see how things go on," although she noted that the Germans have signaled that they are "on board for April" discussion.

Syria - EU close to signing Association Agreement

¶5. (SBU) The EU is "on the brink of signing" an Association Agreement with Syria. While some member states have "doubts" about Syria and want to wait a bit (until after Lebanese election), the Czechs anticipate that it is only a matter of time before the EU comes to consensus and signs.

Belarus - EU to Develop "Indicators"

¶6. (SBU) The Czechs are in favor of Belarus participating at the Eastern Partnership summit in May, although the level of participation remains an open question. No decision has been made to invite Lukashenka and the EU plans to focus on what concrete steps Belarus has, or has not, taken. To this end, Janesova noted that the COEST troika has been working on "indicators" as a means to evaluate Belarus action.

Middle East

¶7. (SBU) The Foreign Ministers will discuss the Middle East over lunch. The EU was pleased that the Quartet was able to meet on the margins of the March 2 Sharm al Sheik conference. Janesova also noted that the Ministers plan to discuss

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developments in Gaza, how to provide the assistance committed at the conference, and where things stand with the Palestinian government. Janesova was surprised to hear that there were potential developments related to the EU re-deploying its border assistance mission in Rafah, as she has not heard any discussion about this within EU channels in quite some time.

Sudan - EU PolDirs to Discuss

¶8. (SBU) The EU Political Directors plan to informally discuss how to move forward on Sudan over lunch on March 16. The PolDirs will also discuss the possibility of augmenting the advisory role of the EUSR for Sudan. Janesova commented that since the EU has already done two statements since the first week of March on Sudan related to the ICC arrest warrant of Sudanese President Bashir and the Sudanese government's expulsion of NGOs, the EU is not planning to do any additional statements for the time being.

Transnistria

¶9. (U) The EU agrees with the USG perspective on the formal 5 plus 2 talks and the need to watch the Moldova April elections.

Thompson-Jones